

Fact Sheet

AB 2088 (Beall)

Establishment of the Secretary of Addiction Prevention and Recovery Services

PROBLEM

Drug and alcohol addiction in California has splintered families and flooded our prisons with inmates. The human misery is compounded by the high cost to the families, the taxpayer, employers, and state government. Drug and alcohol abuse costs the state at least \$44 billion in health care, prevention and treatment, criminal justice, lost productivity, and losses associated with crime. The statistics are alarming.

- ◆ More than 7,300 deaths in California were related to a drinking or substance abuse in 2004.
- ◆ Eighty percent of the families involved in the state Child Welfare Services system have an alcohol or substance abuse problem. And Californians represented 40 percent of all publicly funded treatment admissions nationwide for methamphetamine addiction in 2005.
- ◆ One-fifth of the state's 170,000 inmates are incarcerated primarily on drug offenses but a majority of the inmates are serving time on crimes in which drugs played an ancillary role.

The consequences of substance abuse extend across many governmental agencies but the state has not acted to unify their work, resulting in a disjointed response to a critical problem.

California's efforts to stem alcohol and drug abuse have created a balkanized system in which agencies and department work in isolation despite serving the same client. Clients are taken through multiple levels of care without any coordinated or systematic approach to their cases.

Despite persistent criticism, California has not adopted a comprehensive plan to attack or manage its addiction crisis. As a consequence, the state has no reliable yardstick to measure its success or the lack of it in its battle against addiction.

Instead, the state continues to parcel out addiction's end results to police, the courts, and various agencies. This fragmented approach needlessly creates confusion, impeding people from getting the treatment they require or channeling them into more expensive systems of care.

National think tanks, such as Join Together, have encouraged the states to adopt a more coherent approach to drug and alcohol abuse by creating a high-level office or position with omnipotent authority to coordinate treatment and prevention across all state departments.

THIS BILL

Assembly Bill 2088 bill would create a cabinet-level position, appointed by the Governor, Secretary of Addiction Prevention and Recovery Services, to synchronize funding and services for drug and alcohol programs across all state agencies that serve people suffering from alcoholism or drug addiction. This position is mandated to provide the Legislature with annual reports on issues and progress.

The Secretary shall be responsible for managing the affairs of the department and shall perform all duties, exercise all powers and jurisdiction, and assume and discharge all responsibilities necessary to carry out the purposes of his/her duties. The Secretary shall employ professional, clerical, technical, and administrative personnel as necessary to carry out his/her duties.

AB 2088 is budget neutral. Costs will be absorbed by the existing departments that serve clients suffering from addiction. The secretary will be authorized to collect funds from those appropriate departments to carry out prescribed duties. The bill does not preclude the Legislature from appropriating additional funds.

SUMMARY

California suffers from an alcohol and substance abuse problem that ruins thousands of lives annually yet the state has no coordinated strategy to deal with this issue or even

the ability to quantify what progress – if any --- is being made under policies instituted by law enforcement, the justice and penal systems, as well as social service agencies.

To address this flaw in California's war against substance and alcohol abuse, this bill would create the Secretary of Addiction Prevention and Recovery Services, an appointee of the governor.

The secretary will be charged with carrying out a comprehensive, statewide strategy to combat drug and alcohol abuse and their related problems and incorporate the assistance of all appropriate agencies. The secretary will report directly to the governor.

The secretary will administer funds for state and federal treatment, prevention and recovery, and regulate service providers. The secretary's office will require the authority and wherewithal to gather, analyze, and distribute periodic progress reports on trends and findings.

STATUS/VOTES

SUPPORT

None on file at this time.

OPPOSITION

None on file at this time.